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# THE CLASSICAL JOURNAL

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## Editorial

### THE NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION AND THE *JOURNAL*

The editors of the *Journal* have pleasure in announcing that they have been advised by the Executive Committee of the Association that the negotiations with the New England Classical Association have been completed. In accordance with the arrangements made beginning with the first number of the third volume (November, 1907) the *Journal* will have the advantage of the co-operation of the eastern Association, which will be represented on the Editorial Board by two Associate Editors. As editors of the *Journal* we welcome this co-operation heartily. We are convinced that a common medium of publication will be of advantage to both Associations.

### THE WRANGLE OF THE GRAMMARIANS

Of the many difficulties which confront classical teachers at the present time, it is doubtful whether any one causes more annoyance or confusion than the apparently endless variety of terms applied by different grammarians to the same syntactical category or linguistic or metrical phenomenon. The confusion is brought about partly by writers who cling blindly to old terms, the misleading character of which has long since been demonstrated, and partly by writers who in their zeal for reform are too ready to discard old terms for new. When a term has been proved to be wrong, surely it should be abandoned. This is axiomatic. Yet some men, either because they demand in grammatical discussions the finality of mathematical demonstrations, or because they are afflicted by a singularly virulent form of academic obstinacy, refuse to make any concessions and go on to the end of their days pouring new wine into old bottles. For example, we noticed in a recent elaborate discussion of a point in

prosody that the author used *arsis* for the accented part of the foot and *thesis* for the unaccented, in spite of the fact that it has been established, as satisfactorily as any matter of prosody can be established, that the converse is the correct usage. Furthermore, judging from the careful avoidance of the term in recent textbooks, we are led to the conclusion that some authors still have their doubts about the Volitive Subjunctive, though the soundness of the category has been amply demonstrated by foreign and domestic research, and its convenience in teaching is beyond question.

The greater part of the confusion, however, has not been caused by the conservatives, but by the reformers. Where there is progress there must of course be change; but it is equally clear, even to the most superficial observer, that the extent of the changes in grammatical terminology within the last decade is out of all proportion to the extent of the progress in grammatical science. Grammarians have failed to recognize the fact that in a vast majority of cases investigation can be carried on as successfully under the old names as under the new, and that a new theory in regard, let us say, to the origin of a construction is not necessarily better because the subject has been decked out with a brand-new label. Even conceding that the new terminology is for the most part more precise than the old, a slight difference in degree of precision is not enough to justify a change. Possession is nine-tenths of the law, and a term should not be dislodged unless its use implies error of a positive type. That investigation of grammatical questions will not be hampered by the use of the old terminology is shown by the experience of the Germans. They have been even more active than ourselves in the study of grammar, yet this very productive research-work of theirs has not been accompanied by any serious changes in terminology. With us the situation is a critical one. A class of thirty freshmen will include students of four or five different grammars, who understand neither one another's nor their instructor's terminology. This babel of jargons has a paralyzing effect upon grammatical teaching. It would be in the interest of their own as well as of their students' advancement if the really influential grammarians of the country could be treated like jurors, and be locked up together and denied all but the necessities of life until they agreed upon a system of grammatical terminology.